

break your neck to keep your chin up by commandercosmo

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Other, gender neutral reader

Language: English

Characters: Jim "Chief" Hopper, Reader, You

Relationships: Jim "Chief" Hopper/Reader

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-11-05

Updated: 2017-11-05

Packaged: 2022-04-02 14:37:14

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,367

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

You and Jim have some late-night take out. And some contemplation. You comfort Hop when he starts to contemplate some not-so-great things.

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“D’you ever feel...” Hopper pauses. “D’you ever feel like you’re cursed or somethin’?”

You’re sitting out in a field somewhere with Chief Jim Hopper, looking up at the stars from the hood of his truck. Fast food wrappers are lying abandoned next to you, as the two of you had gotten a late dinner and decided to take it out here to eat. You’d gone through this routine before, but this time Hopper had been strangely silent on the drive and throughout the meal. It was strange to you that *this* is what had been going through his mind the entire time.

You look at your friend, thinking of what he’d said. Your initial reaction was to try to laugh it off, thinking it may be some kind of joke or horror story, but one glance at Hop told you that this was not the case. He wasn’t looking at you, and upon a closer inspection, he seemed... tired. More tired than usual. The type of tired that the usual eight cups of coffee per day couldn’t fix.

“I guess so,” you finally tell him after a few moments of silence. He almost jumps at your response, as though he hadn’t actually expected one from you. You continue.

“Like, bad things keep happening, and only to you, and there isn’t any end in sight?” You ask as though you’re talking about the weather. It wasn’t a new thing to you, feeling like you were alone. Until you’d made friends in Hawkins, you hadn’t really been able to form many meaningful connections at all. You were worried about Hopper, though -- outwardly it hadn’t at all seemed like he was one to be prone to depression.

“Yeah,” Jim says meekly, looking at his hands. You follow his line of sight, and realize that his hands are shaking. He clenches them into fists before continuing. “Yeah, like that. Only, it’s not just you, it’s everyone around you that’s getting messed up. And it’s all your fault.”

You had looked away from Jim, because you knew that he’d probably hate for you to see him like this. Regardless, you can hear the strain in his voice -- the tell-tale sign that tears are bubbling to the surface.

“Oh, Hop,” you say, finally turning to look at him. You’re almost driven to the brink of tears just by looking at him. He looks entirely different than the persona he usually puts forth -- he’s hunched over into himself, and his expression is hopeless. You’ve seen Hopper charm his way into buildings, talk his way out of situations, and you’ve seen him shouting at dangerous men. Chief Jim Hopper had always been a rock; reliable, impenetrable, immovable.

Now, though, he looks like a shell of the man he usually was. His cheeks are wet, and you try not to dwell too much on that, because you know if you do you’ll start crying, too.

“Hopper, look at me,” you say gently. He glances at you out of the corner of his eye, but doesn’t turn towards you. He sets his jaw and stubbornly looks forwards, sniffing his nose purposefully. You can tell he’s trying to rebuild his wall, to shut you out, but you’ve seen too much to just let him stew in sadness like this. You put a hand on his shoulder, which is warm despite the chill of the night.

“Jim, nothing that’s been happening is your fault,” you say quietly.

You push some of the wrappers that are between the two of you onto the ground so that you can scoot a bit closer. All you want to do is to hug the man beside you, but you really don't want to make Hopper uncomfortable. You settle with gently rubbing the space between his shoulders for now, your thighs barely touching.

"I don't know what's going on inside that big brain of yours," you tell him, and he smiles half-heartedly, evidently appreciating your attempt at lightening the mood. "But I am sure that no one thinks badly of you, Hopper. You're doing the best that you can, and I think that everyone can see that."

Hopper lets out a shaky breath, relaxing somewhat next to you. You're sure that he's coming up with a million excuses to what you've said already, so before he can spiral out of control too much, you speak up again.

"I'm proud of you, Hopper," you tell him sincerely. The words echo in the silence of the night -- the only other sounds are the crickets surrounding you. You want to tell him exactly what you're proud of -- all of his hard work, showing you this side of him, keeping it together for so long -- but you can't quite find the words to express that.

Jim is crying now, the tears silently flowing from his cheeks. Though he's not sobbing, or even outwardly emoting much at all, you can tell that this somehow means so much more. He wipes the tears away from his eyes and looks down, almost ashamed.

You smile sadly at him, admiring the way that the moonlight dances on his features. "You don't have to be strong all the time, Hop. It's okay."

Finally, for the first time during this conversation, Jim looks at you. The full effect of his sad blue eyes hits you, and you can't help but raise one of your hands to dry one of the tears that he missed.

This action is, quite apparently, what breaks the dams; Hopper surges forwards and wraps his arms around you, burying his face in the junction between your neck and shoulder. It takes you a moment, but you return the gesture, rubbing small soothing circles on his back.

"Thank you," you hear mumbled into your shirt. You laugh quietly, enjoying the warmth that Hopper provides for you, knowing that he will soon pull away. You try in vain to keep your heart from pounding lest he feel it against his chest.

"Yeah," you finally answer. "Yeah, of course. You know I'm always here for you, right?"

Hopper pulls away from you, and you try not to look too upset at the loss of contact. You put on a smile for your friend as he looks at you.

You're certain he's going to say something witty or snide -- something, in any case, that's entirely Jim Hopper. He's still upset, you can tell, but he looks somewhat more lively than he had when he'd started pouring his heart out.

Just as you're about to ask Hopper what's wrong, he puts a hand through your hair and presses his lips to yours. It's quick, and by the time he pulls away, you're not even sure that the kiss had even

happened.

At your lack of reaction, Hopper immediately begins to panic. “Shit, I’m sorry. I’m sorry, I didn’t even think, I’m such a--”

Your body and your brain had finally caught up to each other, and you cut Hopper off with another kiss before he can finish his apology. This time, you’re able to cup his face in your hand, feeling the scratchy beard under your fingers. You hear Jim groan at the contact, and he turns his head to slot his lips more comfortably onto your own.

You break apart after a few moments, pressing your foreheads together as you catch your breath. You chuckle as you actually register what has happened, and your breath fans out before you in the cold night air.

Jim clears his throat, still looking at your mouth. “I should really have emotional breakdowns more often,” he says wryly.

Your laugh echoes through the field Jim parked in, and soon he’s laughing with you. You can’t help but plant a kiss on his cheek while he’s laughing -- he looks much more handsome when he’s laughing at his own dumb joke than when he’s upset. You tell him as much, which only makes him chuckle more.

Before the night is out, you and Jim spend a little too long kissing on the hood of his car like teenagers. After picking up your discarded food wrappers, Jim drives you back to his place where you fall asleep entangled with each other.

Author's Note:

HEYOOOOOO apparently all I write are depression/anxiety comfort reader insert fics and honestly I'm ok with it

Stranger Things 2 got me so good with all of that Dad!Hopper content. I absolutely love Hopper and would love to write more of him if anyone has requests!